UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/ICEF/1996/NGO/1
22 January 1996

ENGLISH ONLY

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
First regular session 1996
22-26 January 1996

FOR INFORMATION

STATEMENT OF THE LA LECHE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AT ITS FIRST REGULAR SESSION OF 1996

1. As a non-governmental organization (NGO) in consultative status with UNICEF, La Leche League International (LLLI) is committed to participating in the international efforts to promote, protect and support breast-feeding in keeping with the Innocenti Declaration, the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children, the World Declaration and Plan for Action of the International Conference on Nutrition and, more recently, the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

2. LLLI was represented at the NGO Forum and the Fourth World Conference on Women by a delegation of three, who made presentations and participated in breast-feeding workshops.

3. It was extremely important that women representing mother-to-mother support for breast-feeding be present at the Forum and Conference. It was apparent from the many informal conversations that the need for breast-feeding information and support is a universal one. Women everywhere are still encountering barriers in their efforts to breast-feed their babies.

4. For this reason, LLLI applauds the recommendation of UNICEF in the health strategy adopted in 1995 to "promote actions for 'women's groups for women's health' to encourage the active involvement of women in the health system at the community level" (E/ICEF/1995/11/Rev.1). LLLI also applauds the continuing recognition by UNICEF of the important role of NGOs and of civil society in issues that affect women and children.

5. LLLI recommends to the Executive Board that its commitment to breast-feeding be reaffirmed in the report on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women (E/ICEF/1996/3) with the following amendments:

(a) Incorporate language from paragraph 106(w) in the Women and Health Section of the Beijing Platform for Action into paragraph 12 under section B, "Adolescent girls' and women's health", to read: "UNICEF will promote and ensure household and national food security, as appropriate, and implement programmes aimed at improving the nutritional status of all girls and women by implementing the commitments made in the Plan of Action of the International Conference on Nutrition";

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(b) Incorporate the text from paragraph 106(r) in the Women and Health Section of the Beijing Platform for Action, at the end of paragraph 3 in the same section to read: "UNICEF will also promote public information on the benefits of breast-feeding; examine ways and means of implementing fully the World Health Organization/UNICEF International Code on Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes; and enable mothers to breast-feed their infants by providing legal, economic, practical and emotional support."

6. In addition, LLLI is aware of the ever growing population of women and children in refugee and emergency situations and is concerned about the current status of support for breast-feeding women in these situations.

7. LLLI congratulates UNICEF for its response to the particular needs of women and children caught in emergencies, as evidenced in the report entitled "UNICEF emergency services: mission and strategies" (E/ICEF/1996/4).

8. LLLI recommends to the Executive Board that the document on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women (E/ICEF/1996/4) reflect the important role of breast-feeding and that the text protect the breast-feeding mother and baby during emergencies by adding the following suggested wording:

(a) In section V, paragraph 31 on "Health", the second sentence should be amended to read: "UNICEF gives particular emphasis to ensuring that children have access to basic health services, are protected from vaccine-preventable childhood diseases and benefit from prevention and treatment of diarrhoeal diseases, particularly through the promotion, protection and support of breast-feeding";

(b) In the same section, paragraph 32 on "Food and Nutrition", the last sentence should be amended to read: "UNICEF gives high priority to the promotion of household food security through selective inputs to enhance family food production, and through the promotion, protection and support of breast-feeding; it also supports income-generating activities for women.